

A BackWeb Case Study

Remote access technology leads the way for Guidant's mobile workforce

SOLUTION OVERVIEW

A global leader in the medical technology industry, Guidant Corporation provides innovative, minimally invasive and cost-effective products and services for the treatment of cardiovascular and vascular disease. Guidant also provides physicians with leading-edge technologies for improved patient management and clinical outcomes. Guidant is saving time and money by using BackWeb to supply offline access to critical portal content.

With 100 percent of its sales representatives working remotely, Guidant Corporation needed a bulletproof remote access strategy that could provide offline access to critical portal content. "Our focus is on making our sales representatives productive," says John Peasley, Lead Manager for Sales Force Automation at Guidant. "We are particularly interested in improving the delivery of training, marketing, and sales information, both offline as well as online."

Guidant used BackWeb® technology to create Pipeline, an offline portal that streamlines the distribution of sales and training materials to its national network of 1,300 medical device sales representatives. Formerly, this information was sent in paper form, making it difficult to monitor its receipt. Now, no matter where individual salespeople are located, Guidant can deliver the right information to the right person at the right time. BackWeb's multimedia Flash Alerts, notify sales representatives to the arrival of critical content, and large files can be automatically downloaded without interfering with other remote-access activities.

Using Pipeline instead of a courier service such as FedEx saves about two thousand dollars per mailing. Other savings stem from reduced on-site training efforts—at a cost of about two hundred dollars per rep per day. Productivity increases are also significant: sales ramp-up is shortened because field reps now receive top-quality training videos delivered directly to their computers.

BACKGROUND

Headquartered in Indianapolis, Guidant is a \$3 billion medical technology company that develops and manufactures products to treat cardiovascular disease. In an industry where lives depend on thorough understanding of product information, Guidant needs to make sure that its highly mobile workforce of sales representatives can rapidly assimilate information about new products.

"In the past, all of our communication processes were voicemail or paper oriented," recalls John Peasley, lead manager for sales force automation at Guidant. "The sales reps lived on faxes and voice mail."

COMPANY PROFILE:

Guidant is a world leader in the design and development of cardiovascular medical products. Their devices help patients with heart disease return to active and productive lives. They provide physicians with leading-edge technologies for improved patient management and clinical outcomes. And they've created a culture in which employees, investors and our communities share in our success.

CHALLENGE:

"It's an ongoing challenge: How do we get marketing and training material in the hands of our reps in a timely manner so they are equipped to meet with customers. We are a high-tech business, and 65 percent of our revenue comes from products that are less than 12 months old."

William McConnell

*Vice President and
Chief Information Officer
Guidant Corp.*

Peasley is responsible for all aspects of the technology used by Guidant's sales force of 1,300 users. Since 2000, he and his team have been developing a multi-phased strategy for sales force automation that includes reporting, medical device tracking, and online delivery of sales and training information through an offline portal called Pipeline. According to Peasley, the reps are exclusively remote workers so Guidant needed a bulletproof remote access strategy that could address the issues of a sales force dependent on dial-up Internet connections. "Our focus is on making the representatives productive," he says. "We were particularly interested in improving the delivery of training, marketing, and sales information—offline as well as online."

BUSINESS CHALLENGES/OBJECTIVES

Peasley is adamant about supplying the reps with compelling marketing and sales information—not just textual documents. "We are strong believers in multimedia training and sales information such as color slides and video presentations," he says. "The best computer-based training modules incorporate rich video and interactive animation to make the learning experience more appealing to users."

Most of Guidant's sales force works from home and is continually on the road. "Our sales force was growing quite dramatically and we faced huge training challenges," Peasley adds. "We built computer-based training modules to get them up to speed, but we needed a reliable way to deliver those modules."

Peasley knew that being able to deliver computer-based training modules directly to laptop computers would be an incredible advantage for Guidant's mobile sales force, particularly in an industry that depends on current information.

SOLUTION

To realize the vision, Peasley and his team developed a portal infrastructure that delivers important information directly to the reps' laptops whenever they connect to the network. Users can subscribe to content they want to receive and specify which content will be delivered offline. The offline portal solution was developed with BackWeb ProactivePortal™ technologies. BackWeb delivers alerts and digital packages of any size or format, including audio, video, graphics and HTML content.



Guidant's global mobile workforce has offline access to critical information they need wherever they go.

Once downloaded to their laptops, the technology allows the reps to review the material at their leisure when they are offline.

BackWeb includes capabilities to allow critical information to "find" the appropriate user in the appropriate way. Users can establish preferences for how information is prioritized, request notification of delivery to a mobile device when a user is offline, and even request that the content be made available for offline usage. Information Technology (IT) managers can generate reports to discover how often users interact with the content, when they last received content, and which content they interact with most frequently.

"We can monitor content-usage in a closed-loop fashion to ensure that each rep is equipped for the job," says William McConnell, Vice President and Chief Information Officer of Guidant. "Generally, we send out content with a 'normal' priority. But BackWeb lets us flag users by identifying a critical piece of content."

For example, if Guidant needs to deliver an urgent or time-sensitive message, such as an announcement about FDA approval or a bulletin about a product issue, an alert will flash as well. Peasley says it was relatively easy to set up this infrastructure. "We had a few sessions with BackWeb professional services and then we did most of the development ourselves, with the help of one local consultant," he recounts. "It took about four months to develop the back-end infrastructure. Today, we have two administrators managing Pipeline on an on-going basis. We monitor the frequency with which sales reps log on and interact with their sales reports so we can determine if we are delivering useful reports and how we can improve their offline access to critical portal content."

Whenever a sales rep connects to the network, Pipeline automatically identifies pertinent content for download. To preserve network resources, BackWeb's Polite® technology allows Guidant to send information only when adequate bandwidth is available. Byte-level file transfer enables the content to be sent in increments whenever the rep connects to the network. Users can receive content in the background without creating performance interruptions to other network applications such as email and browsing.

For example, a 15-megabyte presentation might be received over the course of several dial-in sessions. "Byte-level file transfers are what enables these dial in connections to be successful," says Peasley. "By contrast, when you click the 'download' button on a web site, all you can do is sit back and wait while the content is transferred. BackWeb can do this in the background while you work on something else. If a rep is dialed in for fifteen minutes on several occasions, it will keep track of which portions of the file have been transferred and ensure that the rep receives a complete file."

RESULTS

McConnell says delivering information through the offline portal gives Guidant a huge competitive advantage. Guidant sales reps are constantly in hospitals or moving between hospitals. Now, he is confident that they always

SOLUTION SET:

- Compaq ProLiant servers running the Microsoft Windows NT operating system
- Global Virtual Private Network (VPN) managed primarily by AT&T
- Microsoft SQL Server Database and Internet Information Server (IIS)
- BEA Web Logic Express application server software
- BackWeb ProactivePortal technologies

RETURN ON INVESTMENT:

"Reps tell us that our training and information delivery infrastructure is a cut above other companies like ours in the industry. They are ecstatic when they see our sophisticated tools and the volume of excellent marketing, sales and training information we can deliver through Pipeline. We now have the ability to send all kinds of content and monitor its receipt. BackWeb has become an essential part of our sales force automation strategy."

John Peasley

*Lead Manager for
Sales Force Automation*

Guidant Corp.



have the right material to present to physicians. "Our remote access technology is very robust and stable," he says. "BackWeb overcomes the constraints of dial-in technology, allowing us to communicate with the field organization at an optimal level."

For example, recently Guidant's marketing group created an important document that they wanted reps to present to physicians. "We wanted to ensure they received the content quickly, so we used BackWeb to monitor the take-up rate," adds Peasley. "In just 12 hours, we were able to ensure that the entire organization had received the document. Our managers were extremely pleased to see that we could communicate a critical message so quickly and effectively."

Peasley estimates that using Pipeline instead of a courier service such as FedEx saves about two thousand dollars per mailing. Other hard savings stem from reduced on-site training efforts: sending multimedia training materials through Pipeline means face-to-face training can be cut down or eliminated—at a cost of about two hundred dollars per rep per day. Sales ramp-up is shortened by several months because field reps now receive top-quality training videos delivered directly to their computers. And with the BackWeb closed-loop reporting and Rapid Survey features, the field reps are tested for comprehension and certified on new products within a few days, as opposed to a few months.

LOOKING AHEAD

In the future, Guidant plans to continue to take advantage of BackWeb's advanced capabilities for offline access to critical content. "BackWeb takes the guesswork out of communications by automating the information flow and by helping us assure that our messages are read," says McConnell. "With BackWeb, we are using our network to create a more powerful and useful way to reach our sales force."

Peasley concurs. "Reps who have come from competing companies tell us that our training and information delivery infrastructure is a cut above other companies like ours in the industry. They are ecstatic when they see our sophisticated tools and the volume of excellent marketing sales and training information we can deliver through Pipeline. We now have the ability to send all kinds of content and monitor its receipt. BackWeb has become an essential part of our sales force automation strategy."

**For more information about BackWeb
call 1-800-863-0100 or visit our
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